



TOWN OF HANCOCK, MARYLAND
126 W. High St., Hancock, MD 21750



February 20, 2024

Subject: Testimony in Support of HB 449 - Comprehensive Flood Management Grant Program - Funding for Underserved and Overburdened Communities

To the Honorable Members of the House Environment and Transportation Committee,

Dear Committee Members,

On behalf of the Town of Hancock, I am writing to express our support for House Bill 449, which seeks to establish the Comprehensive Flood Management Grant Program. This program is particularly aimed at providing critical funding and support for underserved and overburdened communities facing significant flood risks.

The introduction of this bill is a commendable step towards addressing the challenges faced by communities situated in floodplains, many of which include low-income areas, minority populations, and areas with limited English proficiency. The focus on these communities is not only a matter of equity but also a strategic investment in the resilience and sustainability of our state's most vulnerable areas.

While we are in full support of the bill's objectives, we would like to offer a few comments and suggestions that could enhance its effectiveness and applicability, particularly for towns like Hancock:

Expansion of Eligible Projects: The current scope of eligible projects under the bill is focusing primarily on "owner-occupied" dwellings in the immediate aftermath of a flood event. We propose broadening the eligibility criteria to include the acquisition and conversion of properties, including commercial properties, into green spaces or community assets. This expansion would greatly benefit towns like Hancock, where significant portions of our downtown area lie within a floodplain. For example, a de-commissioned gas station adjacent to Joseph Hancock Park, currently unsuitable for commercial development due to floodplain considerations, could be transformed into a valuable extension of our public park if eligibility criteria were broadened.

Local Government Contribution Requirements: The bill currently anticipates a local government contribution of 25% to 50% for projects. While understandable, this requirement could pose significant challenges for small towns with limited financial resources. We suggest implementing a sliding scale for local contributions based on the size and tax base of the community, ensuring that smaller towns are not disproportionately burdened.



TOWN OF HANCOCK, MARYLAND

126 W. High St., Hancock, MD 21750



addressing these concerns, HB 449 can become an even more powerful tool for not only providing immediate relief in the aftermath of floods but also for enabling strategic, long-term planning and development that enhances community resilience and environmental stewardship.

The Town of Hancock stands ready to support this important legislation and looks forward to collaborating with the state and other stakeholders in its implementation. We thank you for your consideration of our testimony and for your commitment to protecting Maryland's communities from the increasing threats of flooding.

Sincerely,

Michael Faith, Town Manager